

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Pacific Northwest Farmers Cooperative

Idaho TechHelp

Pacific Northwest Farmers Cooperative Passes AIB International Food Safety Audit

Client Profile:

Pacific Northwest Farmers Cooperative (PNW) was formed in 2008 by the merger of Genesee Union Warehouse and Whitman County Growers. PNW's mission is to move wheat and legumes from the Palouse region to tables around the world. The company has grown from a single silo to a network of 750 producers and 26 facilities in 17 locations feeding multiple barge, rail, and modern processing terminals. PNW employs 50 people.

Situation:

In the Palouse region of Idaho, known for its rolling wheat hills, garbanzo beans are rapidly gaining attention. Garbanzo beans, also known as chick peas, are being made into many familiar products by PNW customers across the nation. Humus dip and ready to eat garbanzos used in salads, soups and other products are becoming increasingly popular. Growth in demand for garbanzos, dried peas and lentils combined with customer demand for quality product and food safety led PNW to seek official certification of its food safety system. PNW brought in Jeff Kronenberg, food specialist for the University of Idaho and TechHelp, a NIST MEP network affiliate, to provide technical assistance in upgrading food safety systems to meet the requirements of the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) certification as well as develop a comprehensive food safety and Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) program.

Solution:

TechHelp examined PNW's facilities and encouraged them to seek a third party food safety certification. The company also needed help training new employees hired to run new technically advanced equipment. Kronenberg provided an on-site GFSI Gap Assessment to develop a road map for PNW to implement the Safe Quality Food 2000 standard in its bean processing operation. Kronenberg provided on site technical assistance and training for the development of PNW's food safety and HACCP programs and, in addition, conducted a comprehensive food safety gap analysis and helped PNW prepare for their food safety audit. As a result of TechHelp's assistance, PNW made changes in plant, equipment, training and processes that placed them in position to pass the AIB International food safety plant audit with an "excellent" rating.

Results:

- * Increased sales by \$3.133 million.
- * Retained sales of \$10 million.
- * Realized \$250,000 in cost savings.
- * Avoided \$5 million in unnecessary investments.
- * Invested \$1.8 million in plant equipment, information systems, and workforce development.

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- * Created 6 jobs.
- * Retained 10 jobs.

Testimonial:

"I want to thank Jeff for all the hard work he went through to get us up to speed."

Bill Newbry, CEO